

Post-colonial African literatures in translation: A case study of *L'Ivrogne dans la brousse* (1953) by Raymond Queneau and *La Flèche de Dieu* (1978) by Irène Assiba  
d'Almeida/Olga Mahougbé Simpson

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## ABSTRACT

In a hierarchized global community, literary activities intrinsic to minority societies differ to a certain extent from what obtains in the more developed nations. This thesis analyzes the translation practices of Raymond Queneau and Irène Assiba d'Almeida in collaboration with Olga Mahougbé Simpson, translators of two different books written by authors from minority societies in the global community. The translations are entitled *L'Ivrogne dans la brousse*, first published by *Éditions Gallimard* in 1953, and *La Flèche de Dieu*, published by *Présence Africaine* in 1978. The original books: *The Palm-Wine Drinkard and his Dead Palm-Wine Tapster in the Deads' Town* by Amos Tutuola (1952) and *Arrow of God* by Chinua Achebe (1964) tell of the sociological and educational backgrounds of the authors and also reveal the societal influences that impact their novels and eventually the translations of these novels.

This thesis also surveys the familiarity of both translators with the customs and beliefs inherent in African texts through an analysis of their translations of culturally inflected statements and the peculiar language use of the authors. It concludes with the collation and analysis of previous research carried out on such thematic elements as hybridity and agency in Translation Studies as they relate to African postcolonial literature.

## RÉSUMÉ

Dans une communauté mondiale hiérarchisée, l'activité littéraire des sociétés minoritaires diffère de celle issue des sociétés développées. La thèse analyse les pratiques de traduction de Raymond Queneau et Irène Assiba d'Almeida en collaboration avec Olga Mahougbé Simpson, traducteurs de deux romans écrits par des auteurs appartenant à des groupes minoritaires dans la communauté mondiale.

Les traductions sont intitulées *L'Ivrogne dans la brousse*, publiée par *Éditions Gallimard* en 1953 et *La Flèche de Dieu*, publiée par *Présence Africaine* en 1978. Les œuvres originales mettent à nu les milieux sociologiques et éducatifs des auteurs et révèlent aussi des influences sociales qui donnent un impact sur leurs romans et ultérieurement les traductions de ces romans. Elles sont intitulées *The Palm-Wine Drinkard and his Dead Palm-Wine Tapster in the Deads' Town* par Amos Tutuola (1952) and *Arrow of God* par Chinua Achebe (1964).

La thèse examine également la familiarité des deux auteurs avec les coutumes et les croyances inhérentes dans les textes africains à travers une analyse de leurs traductions des déclarations fléchies culturellement et l'utilisation de la langue particulière des auteurs. La thèse conclut à rassembler et à analyser la recherche qui était déjà faite sur les sujets tels que l'hybridité et l'Agence dans les études en traductologie par rapport à la littérature postcoloniale africaine.

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## INTRODUCTION

The choice of the translated texts of the fictional post-colonial works, (*L'Ivrogne dans la brousse* by Raymond Queneau and *La Flèche de Dieu* by Irène Assiba D'Almeida/Olga Mahougbé Simpson), that both serve as a case study for this thesis is an effort to acknowledge or refute the hypothetical claim that textual manipulation occur during the translation process. The concept of “translation as manipulation” is occasionally mentioned in the theories of Translation studies. (See Lefevere and Bassnett, 1992 and Herman, 1999). The reasons for textual manipulation range between faithfulness to the author and faithfulness to the target audience.

The selected texts fall under the category of African post-colonial literature. From a historical account, post-colonial writing emerged from societies that were, at some point, subject to European colonialism (Ashcroft et al, 1989). The literary languages of these writings or the modes of written communication were different from the accepted literary practices of the developed world (Bandia, 2008). This is the case in African postcolonial writing which is often a mix of foreign and vernacular languages. The effect of colonialism on African literatures can be linked to the multilingual literary tradition practiced by African writers. The literatures often contain the style and practice of the African oral tradition translated into written material.

African postcolonial writing has evolved and is still evolving. According to Ashcroft et al, the prevalent literary criticism of postcolonial writing in Africa and the diaspora has



centered on “issues of decolonisation, the relationship of the modern writer to traditional practice, and the question of language choice...” (Ashcroft et al, 1989, p. 139). These practices are felt in various ways. For instance, the literatures produced by African writers often incorporate rhetorical narratives (evident in the African oral tradition), such as proverbs, rhetoric, idioms as well as multiple languages as pidgins and native tongues.

African postcolonial literature as a subject in Translation studies cannot be analyzed without mention of the African Oral Tradition, (Bandia, 2008), followed by a discussion of the prevalent asymmetric power relations in translation activities. In other words, translation to major languages from minor languages and vice-versa (Tymoczko, 1999; Bassnett and Lefevere, 1992; Venuti, 2008), Hybridity (Bhabha, 1994; Bandia, 1993 and 2013) and Agency (Milton and Bandia, 2009) in relation to the practices of *Éditions Gallimard* and *Présence Africaine* (see chapter four).

In the field of Translation Studies, several scholars and theorists, some of whom are mentioned above have written on post-colonial translation in which the common definition is translation done from minor to dominant languages. The discourse on power inequality between different countries can also be linked to the inequality that exists between literatures from these countries and the approaches taken towards their translations. It is noted “... the way a central culture translates texts produced by cultures it considers peripheral, that the importance of such factors as ideology, poetics,

and the Universe of Discourse is most obviously revealed. (Lefevere and Bassnett, 1992, p. 70).

Often, there are issues and concerns surrounding the translation of minority languages and cultures. These include the choice of the work to be translated and the reasons behind the techniques applied during the translation process. Scholars in the field of Translation Studies continue to study all those who are connected in the literary sphere such as literary agents, the publishing house and the target audience in a bid to understand the norms surrounding the translation of minority literatures. That is to say that the norms set, for example, by major publication houses, followed by the norms set by seasoned translators stand as models for the reading public in much the same way that the evolving tastes of the reading public influence the agents and publication houses. As examples to buttress this view, a look at the choice of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* to be translated into *L'Ivrogne dans la brousse*. There is no doubt of the book's popularity in the Western world which has been documented extensively in scholarly texts. (Citations are given in the chapters below). Therefore, the heightened curiosity of the public to read the book in their different languages that at the time was making great waves in England and the U.S.A should not come as a surprise. However, the choice of *Arrow of God* to be translated into *La Flèche de Dieu* rests on the publishing house, *Présence Africaine*, and the translator who, for reasons that can be guessed at, wanted a translation that was faithful to the source text in the best possible way.

Furthermore, Translation studies has reiterated the importance of hybridity in postcolonial discourse in place of prescriptive approaches. The studies invariably look at the dynamics involved in postcolonial writing and its translation. Hybridity is a commonly used term in the discussion of minority cultures and languages because of its prevalence in postcolonial works. In the *Location of culture* Bhabha describes hybridity as “a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other ‘denied’ knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority, its rules of recognition” (1994, p. 114).

Other theoretical discourses highlighted in the course of this thesis include: ethnocentrism versus ethnodeviant and literal versus free translations. These are juxtaposed in a bid to appropriately place each theory to the applicable case study. The sociological paradigm of agency and agents in a given literary circle and their effects on what is translated/how it is translated is an active part of this thesis’ general discourse.

## 1. L'IVROGNE DANS LA BROUSSE

### 1.1 An introduction to Amos Tutuola and his book *The Palm-Wine Drinkard and his Dead Palm-Wine Tapster in the Dead's Town*

Amos Tutuola, a writer of short stories, was born in Abeokuta, Nigeria, in 1920. He wrote the book, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard and his Dead Palm-Wine Tapster in the Dead's Town* (*The PWD*) which was published in 1952 by the company Faber & Faber Limited. Tutuola's novel is one of the two books used as the case study of this thesis and will be analyzed from a sociological and literary standpoint within the context of its impact on translation theories and practices. In other words "The normative conception of translation which privileges the original text as an absolute point of reference..." (Mueller-Vollmer and Irmischer, 1998, Introduction xi).

The research done on the sociological background of the author, Tutuola need a historical narration of the educational institutions during his era, for in this period, Nigeria was still under the colonial rule and the English language had already begun to take an eminent position in society affairs so much so that the author's language, Yoruba and several other indigenous languages were paid less attention (Paraphrased, Awoniyi, 1975, pp. 65-66). For those born in the villages of Yorubaland like Tutuola, the Yoruba language continued to have a great influence on the people, that is social, economic and educational influence. However, as time passed and the cities grew nearer to the rural areas, the aspiration to learn the English language also spread amongst the

villagers. Tutuola was no exception. For example, he attended the Lagos high school as is later mentioned in this thesis. Timothy A. Awoniyi mentions “The Education Ordinance of 1882...as the first colonial act intended to control and direct the educational activities of the Christian missionaries in what is now Nigeria” (Awoniyi, 1975, p. 66). The ordinance prioritized the teaching of the English language in schools to students who mostly interacted with others in their native tongues. This proved to be difficult and as a result, teachers were liberated to use Yoruba to teach students English which caused “teachers and pupils to mix languages without competence in either” (Paraphrased, Awoniyi, 1975, p. 70). Using this brief historical reference as a guide, Tutuola can be seen clearly as a product of his times.

From a literary standpoint, Tutuola’s writings have been seen as a representation of Sub-Saharan literature and thus have been extensively critiqued all around the globe. This is because he was the first West African to get a book published in English, albeit in a supposedly sub-standard form of the language, that is however fascinating because of its non-conforming literary variety.

Amos Tutuola became famous in the western literary community because of the reviews written by popular literary icons such as Dylan Thomas, Eric Larrabee, Eric Robinson, Gerald Moore, among others. The tone of the reviews on *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* was either complimentary or censorious, in support or in opposition of the book’s diction, respectively. There was also the matter of the tale’s distinctiveness, pointedly described as primitive literature in some circles. (Lindfors and Marshall,

1975, p.10). However, it was welcome in other literary circles by those who wanted a fresh perspective from the prevalent storytelling and from the literary techniques associated with the regular tales.

The language used in the writing of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* is a mix of the stated sub-standard English, the West-African Pidgin English (WAPE) and lastly, calqued English translated almost directly from Amos Tutuola's mother tongue, Yoruba. This can be reiterated with excerpts from the book.

*"...and changed myself to a very small bird which I could **describe as a "sparrow" in English language**". (p.28). "... but when I entered the room, I **met a bed...**". (*The PWD*, 1952, p.13). [Emphases are mine].*

Tutuola's use of calqued language appears quite frequently in the book and this may be attributed to the fact that the writer grew up in a village where he learnt folktales and the art of retelling them in the Yoruba Language. "... when work and play were finished for the day, he and his young friend would sit in the darkness and tell one another stories; ghost stories, moral tales; any narrative that entertained" (Lindfors, 1975, p.35). Therefore, Tutuola was more used to narrating his story in the fashion of the Yorubas. In the same vein, *Sozaboy* by Ken Saro-Wiwa was also written in what was described as 'rotten' English but his book was critically acclaimed because he was a well-known journalist. *Sozaboy* was seen as a deliberate art rather than a literary work full of grammatical errors, "...a brand of experimental English" (Cole, vol. 33-n.4, p. 206).

The authors, Tutuola and Saro-Wiwa were perceived in different lights probably because Tutuola was reportedly described as semi-literate.

In 1930, Tutuola became a pupil at the Salvation Army Primary School for a year, he attended the Anglican Central School for a period of three years and then moved on to the Lagos High School for two years which made for a total number of six years as opposed to the standard thirteen years or more required then for a complete education<sup>1</sup>. Regarding the use of West African Pidgin English, Tutuola was a resident of Lagos, the socio-economic center of Nigeria and it is normal to expect that he was exposed early on to one of the lingua francas of the country.

As will be shown in the sub-heading below, “Regular English sentence constructions”, Tutuola’s writings contain certain statements that neither fall in the category of Pidgin English nor in other forms of sub-standard English (Example: broken English), although the former and latter are clearly found in the book.

With a vast knowledge of the Yoruba traditional tales, Tutuola was intrigued when he saw an advertisement for religious manuscripts in a local paper placed there by The United Society for Christian Literature (Lindfors, 1975, Introduction). It has been stated that Tutuola “came across a journal published by the Information Service, the cover of which showed an impressive statue of *Orisha*, the name given to a Yoruba god. The

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<sup>1</sup> <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1100/Nigeria-HISTORY-BACKGROUND.html>

In the 1950s, Nigeria adopted the British system called Form Six that divided grades into six elementary years, three junior secondary years, two senior secondary years, and a two-year university preparation program. (An additional three-year or more university program follows after the preparation program)

divinities, customs and festivities of his people were described in detail in the magazine”<sup>2</sup>. With the help of The United Society for Christian Literature, Tutuola’s work was passed on to the publishing company, Faber and Faber Limited, and *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* was eventually published in 1952.

Tutuola was born to Christian parents but had a pagan grandfather. These two religious beliefs play major roles in his narrative and explain his dual representation of the Christian God and traditional African deities. Tutuola can understandably be said to have embraced the new Christian religion and culture gotten from the former colonizers of the Nigerian society and knew the Christian doctrine to a considerable extent. He, however, portrayed more of his traditional beliefs and ideals in his tale of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*. This can be gleaned from his statement:

*“What was in my mind? Well, Oh ... the time I wrote it, what was in my mind was that I noticed that our young men, our young sons and daughters did not pay much attention to our traditional things or culture or customs. They adopted, they concentrated their minds only on European things. They left our customs, so if I do this they may change their mind... to remember our custom, not to leave it to die. ... That was my intention”.* (Thelwell, 1984).

Tutuola’s *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* was reviewed and analyzed by several literary artists including Dylan Thomas and Wole Soyinka. Below are excerpts of their

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.africultures.com/php/?nav=article&no=9389#sthash.WzeXDF5X.dpuf>



comments on the book. “(...) a brief, thronged, grisly and bewitching story (...) written in English by a West African (...) Nothing is too prodigious or too trivial to put down in this tall, devilish story! (Thomas, 1975, p. 7).

To cap it all, Soyinka in an article entitled “From a Common Back Cloth: A Reassessment of the African Literary Image” describes Tutuola as a “new Nigerian writer gathering multifarious experiences under, if you like, the two cultures and exploiting them in one extravagant, confident whole”. (Soyinka, vol. 32, n. 3, p. 390).

These excerpts, especially the former, succinctly describe *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*.

The ways in which the translation of Tutuola’s *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* has impacted the field of Translation is subsequently discussed. First, is an introduction to the translator.

## **1.2 A brief introduction to the translator, Raymond Queneau**

Raymond Queneau was born in Le Havre, France in 1903. He became an editor at *Éditions Gallimard* and also has several publications to his credit. Queneau translated a few books including Tutuola’s *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*. Queneau’s literary accomplishments can be seen in light of the impact of his philosophical disposition on his literary style. He subscribed to the tenets of the literary group called “Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle (ouLiPo),” which he co-founded in 1960. The literary group

sought, among other things, to inspire a new consciousness underpinned by the need to replace old literary devices with new modes of thinking, writing or expressing oneself. The ouLiPo is also described as “un atelier ou un séminaire de littérature expérimentale abordant de manière scientifique ce que n'avaient fait que pressentir les troubadours, les rhétoriciens [...]”. (Motte, 2006 Vol. 31, No. 1, p. 44).

Raymond Queneau's translation, *L'Ivrogne dans la brousse* was done without the author's authorization<sup>3</sup>. There was no contact between the publisher and the author prior to his work being commissioned for translation and there was also no documented communication between Queneau and Tutuola, not even for verification of the translated text. However, in the translation, Queneau mentioned Tutuola in his preface in which he described the author's background and affirmed that “il a écrit directement en anglais” (Bush, 2012, p. 517).

As an editor and writer for the publication house, *Éditions Gallimard*, Queneau enjoyed a considerable good status in the literary community and was already established as a notable theorist in his field. This is to say that he was in a privileged position that could have guaranteed an avant-garde translation of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, if he so wished. Although, it has been established that Queneau was successful in his career, however, he is not really known for his translations, which are few in number. The theoretical implication of an avant-garde translation of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*,

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<sup>3</sup> This is confirmed in the article written by Ruth Bush “*Le Monde s'effondre? Translating Anglophone African Literature in the World Republic of Letters*”.

therefore, would have brought him more recognition and made him ‘visible’. In plain English, in a scenario where Queneau takes an ‘ethnodeviant’ position to translation as opposed to an ‘ethnocentric’ position, the discourse transcends beyond mere comparisons of his theoretical position to traditional translation theories and the practice of fluency.

It can also be argued that Queneau’s approach cannot be classified under an ethnocentric-type translation. His intent was probably a need to make the reader see the story as the author must have envisioned it, without the ‘barrier’ of languages and the ‘hindrance’ of different cultural backgrounds. In other words, it is no longer relevant that Tutuola is a semi-literate because of the poor education he received from a system that had failed him, but an accomplished author whose desire is to create and entertain. It is important to state clearly that translations that are faithful to the original postcolonial text in every way are the ‘visible’ translations in as much as the translator allows himself/herself to be visible by bringing in new cultural ideas to a target language and culture from the source language and culture. This means that if the original text is in fluent language, the target text represents that fact and vice-versa, yet, this is often not the case in postcolonial literary texts.

Furthermore, in a paper published by André Leroux and Jean-François Leroux, it is noted that;

“Although less well known, his substantial oeuvre in verse shows that if Queneau is habitually jocose, his antics are meant in deadly earnest. *Combining metaphysical high*

*jinks with mathematical, linguistic, and stylistic experimentation*, ignorance with learning, high with low, *tradition with invention*". (Leroux and Leroux, 2002, vol.258) [Italics and bold texts are mine for emphasis].

Raymond Queneau showed this knack for invention in words such as "malafoutier", "Père-Des-Dieux-Qui-Peut-Tout-Faire-En-Ce-Monde" and "Ville-Céleste-D'ou-L'on-Ne-Revient-Pas" (Queneau, 1952, pp.13, 64), yet they attest more to his personal style of writing, which is evident in his other works and is a basic tenet of the ouLipo.

As earlier cited in the statement "il a écrit directement en anglais", Queneau referred to Tutuola's language as *English*, seemingly oblivious to its approximate or hybrid nature. Following this line of reasoning, one can deduce that his approach to the translation of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* was to correct the language used rather than to capture its peculiarities. The end result was to render the translation into simplified but standard French, to be read easily by a target audience. The noticeable concessions to the source language were Queneau's own inventions, simpler French tenses and a borrowed word 'malafoutier' which comes from an African dialect<sup>4</sup> spoken in the Congo and having little or nothing to do with Tutuola's native language, Yorubas, spoken in Nigeria. From the first two paragraphs of Queneau's translation, Bush notes that "the colloquial verb

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<sup>4</sup> *Malafoutier* from the word *malâfu* which originates from the dialect *Kituba* spoken in Congo. It is defined as "Une personne dont l'occupation principale est de recueillir la sève des palmiers consommée comme vin de palme. Omer Massoumou and Ambroise Queffélec (*Le français en République du Congo : sous l'ère pluripartiste* 1991-2006) Published in Paris : Archives contemporaines ; [Montréal (Canada)] : Agence universitaire de la francophonie, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Yoruba is one of the indigenous languages, spoken in the south-western part of Nigeria. *Language survey in Nigeria* (Bede Osaji, 1979).

“soûler” and the anglicized “recordman” immediately give the sense of less formal language. Though grammatically Tutuola’s sentences are smoothed to more standard French structures...” (Bush, 2012, p. 516). In other words, Tutuola’s unique language oddly equals ordinary spoken/written French.

### **1.3 Raymond Queneau’s language manipulation: from sub-standard English to regular French**

The following are juxtapositions of excerpts drawn from Amos Tutuola’s *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* and Raymond Queneau’s translation *L’Ivrogne dans la brousse*. These translations are picked in order to reflect the approach and style of Raymond Queneau and the examples are classified under various headings to show ways in which Tutuola bends the English language to his taste and style. Each excerpt is subsequently followed by its translation.

#### ***a. The oddities in Amos Tutuola’s sentence constructions and their translations***

In the book, *The African Palimpsest*, Chantal Zabus remarks that “Tutuola is for the most part inadvertently calquing, yet safeguarding the rhetoric, word play and bizarre imagery cherished by the Yoruba”. This observation explains the literary work by

Tutuola, which is obviously written in unconventional English. However, one can say that his writings are unique because of the odd use of the English language which is consistent throughout the book. His lack of a complete and proper education neither blurs out his style nor talent. For some have said that he was greatly influenced by the likes of D.O. Fagunwa and John Bunyan. This is proven true as Tutuola's diction ranges between "juju-man" (The *PWD*, 1952, p.23) and "orchestras" (The *PWD*, 1952, p.68). At the same time, it opens up a fresh perspective of Tutuola as not the completely ignorant writer as most classified him to be, but as an intellectual who loved to read and write about the world around him despite his personal limitations. Coming from this point of view, his language becomes a model, a style to uphold both in translation and in other literary forms.

Examples abound that demonstrate the oddities in Tutuola's language and the manner in which they were translated.

*But when my father noticed that I could not do any work more than to drink, he engaged an expert palm-wine tapster for me; [...]* (The *PWD*, p.7)

*Quand mon père s'est aperçu que je ne pouvais rien faire d'autre que de boire, il a engagé pour moi un excellent malafoutier [...]* (L'Ivrogne dans la brousse, p.9)

"... and throughout that day I felt not so happy as before; I was seriously sat down in my parlour, [...]" (The *PWD*, p. 8)

"...et, durant toute cette journée-là, je ne me sens plus aussi heureux qu'auparavant; je reste assis tout chose dans mon salon, [...]" (L'Ivrogne dans la brousse, p.10)

“... the strings of the drum **tighted me** so that I was hardly breathing. [...] I myself commanded the ropes of the yams in his garden to **tight him there**, ...” (The PWD, p. 12)

“...les cordes du tambour **me ligotent**, et si fort que je peux à peine respirer. [...] moi j’ordonne aux fils qui attachaient les ignames aux tuteurs **de le ligoter sur place**...” (L’Ivrogne dans la brousse, p.15)

“He stood before two plants, then he cut a single opposite leaf from the opposite plant; [...]. Then he cut another single compound leaf from the compound plant which was in the same place with the opposite plant...” (The PWD, p. 30)

“Il se tenait devant deux plantes, alors il coupe une unique feuille opposée de la plante opposée; [...]. Ensuite, il coupe **une autre unique feuille composée de la plante composée qui se trouvait dans le même endroit que la plante opposée**...” (L’Ivrogne dans la brousse, p.33-34)

It can therefore be deduced from the French translations above that Raymond Queneau translated a language that was concocted by the writer, Amos Tutuola, from his different experiences and influences, into easy and readable French. It is common practice of the French to “...adapt all things to it, rather than try to adapt themselves to the taste of another time” (Lefevere, 1992, p.74). This perspective helps to explain the position of

Queneau as a translator in the 1950s and the possible reason (be it innate or external) for his *free* style in translating *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*.

In regards to the use of verbs as the excerpts show, some past tenses were translated into the present tense, vague statements in the original text which have been highlighted in the above extracts remained vague in French, possibly because the translator did not fully understand the author. Here is an example:

“...but the Skull chased her and within a few yards, he caught her, [...] he hastily ran to her front **and stopped her as a log of wood**” (*The PWD*, p. 22)

And its translation:

“...mais **Crâne la poursuit** et, en quelques mètres, il la rattrape, [...] il court en toute hâte au-devant d'elle **et l'arrête net en tant que tronc d'arbre**” (*L'Ivrogne dans la brousse*, p.25).

The extract from *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* is incomplete and vague, however, the free style approach applied to its translation also repeats the vagueness of the author. At other times, the meaning is preserved but the form and structure of the original text is lost in the translation.

“Now the wife was lost and how to get her back from **the hungry-creature's stomach?** **For the safety of an egg the wife was in hungry-creature's stomach**” (*The PWD*, p. 109)



*“Voilà la femme perdue, et comment la retirer de l’estomac de l’Affamé? Pour sauver un oeuf, la femme se trouvait dans l’estomac de l’Affamé” (L’Ivrogne dans la brousse, p.124).*

In answering the question about whether or not Raymond Queneau could have been able to translate Tutuola’s book in a way that did not diminish the French language while simultaneously upholding the style of the writer, Jean Sévry’s *La Voix*, translated in 1985 becomes an apt example. To start with, *The Voice* by Gabriel Okara, has been correctly described as unconventional by some critics, however, there is a consensus on the book's innovative literary style. Okara is literate and writes with the intention of showcasing the *Ijaw*’s (a Nigerian language) African idioms in writing. A kind of translation in itself. The translator in his translation also took into account the book’s peculiarity and was able to reenact the engaging conversations in his French rendition of the original book.

Jean Sévry’s rendering of this text “They now feel that I really am a witch, so I put fear into their insides” (*The Voice*, 1964, p. 56) in translation is just as unconventional as the original text. “Maintenant, ils croient vraiment que je suis une sorcière, aussi je mets de la peur en leur for intérieur” (*La Voix*, 1985, p. 48).

It seems appropriate to state that a variety of languages should engender a variety of translations, which neither remove nor add to the original text and yet, showcase the differences, the innovativeness of this original. Some have regarded the lack of acknowledging language multiplicity or variety in literary works as a continuation of

hegemonic control. Susan Bassnett concludes her introduction in the book *Post-Colonial Translation, Theory and Practice* with an appropriate explanation of these literary occurrences.

*“Translation has been at the heart of the colonial encounter, and has been used in all kinds of ways to establish and perpetuate the superiority of some cultures over others. But now, with increasing awareness of the unequal power relations involved in the transfer of texts across cultures, we are in a position to rethink both the history of translation and its contemporary practice” (Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999, p.17).*

### ***b. Spelling Error***

This thesis starts with an analysis of the ungrammatical and unconventional structure in the book by Amos Tutuola, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, because they are traits that become immediately noticeable to a reader. However, the wrong spelling of the word ‘boil’ as ‘buoy’ is not only ungrammatical in the sentence in which it was used but also confuses the intended meaning of the author, as the contextual meaning reveals. Faber and Faber Limited, the publication house for *L’Ivrogne dans la brousse* were determined in their decision to present the work in its crude form. They went as far as publishing a page of the manuscript into the book in order to emphasize the originality of the work.

Furthermore, looking at the entire statement, the word, ‘buoy’ does not fit into the context and suggests that the writer had a different meaning in mind but based on his educational background and the almost non-existent editing that his book received, the spelling error remained. Unfortunately, the error also made its way into the translation by Raymond Queneau. An analysis of the impact of the error as it affects the understanding of a reader is below.

According to the Oxford dictionary (2016), the word ‘buoy’ means: “An anchored float serving as a navigation mark, to show reefs or other hazards, or for mooring”. Following this definition, the excerpt below and its translation become difficult to conceive.

*“... I noticed that **the left hand thumb of my wife was swelling out as if it was a buoy**, but it did not pain her” (The PWD, p. 31)*

*“...je remarque que **le pouce de la main gauche de ma femme enflait comme si ç’avait été une bouée**, mais ça ne lui faisait pas mal” (L’Ivrogne dans la brousse, p. 35)*

The definition of the word ‘buoy’ does not indicate a *swelling*, however, the word ‘boil’ is defined as such by the Oxford dictionary. It is “an inflamed pus-filled swelling on the skin, typically caused by the infection of a hair follicle”. It is more probable that a boil which has bodily fluids in it should depict the conditions of pregnancy, rather than a buoy which is basically a physical symbol in maritime affairs and is usually of too great a size for this particular scenario. It is more likely that Amos Tutuola was referring to the former rather than the latter as the pronunciation of both words are somewhat similar to semi-literate, non-native speakers of the English Language.

It is essential to note that in the translation, *L'Ivrogne dans la brousse* has the word 'bouée' as opposed to 'furoncle'. Needless to say that the imagery created in the mind of the reader will be very different from the author's intent.

### ***c. Repetitions (Oral tradition of the Yorubas)***

There have been different terms used to describe the work of Amos Tutuola but a good term to capture a good portion of his writings are the words 'Yoruba English'. It is a language that seeks to express African indigenous idioms using a foreign language. According to O.R. Dathorne,

"Tutuola's English is a sensible compromise, between raw pidgin (which would not be intelligible to European readers) and standard English". (1971, p. 72).

Thelwell referred to the book as "transliterations of conventional folktales into the idiomatic "young English" [...], of the Nigerian masses". (1984, p. 188).

In reference to Amos Tutuola's works, Yoruba English is a term first used in an article called "Language and Sources of Amos Tutuola" by Adesina Afolayan to elucidate and highlight the process in which Amos Tutuola converted the Yoruba language into the English language. (1975, p.193).

In examining the Yoruba English expressions in the book *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, it is easy to note that the writer, Tutuola successfully passes across his Yoruba world view

and realities into the English language. There are aspects of his writings that can be blamed on his language competence but others are simply his translations (consciously or not) from Yoruba to English in which as suggested by A. Afolayan “... Tutuola thinks that he is correct when he writes” (Afolayan, 1975, p. 206).

The Yoruba folktale narratives put particular emphasis on words to stress their importance as a way of speech, this is to ensure that an audience understands and acknowledges the seriousness of an issue. These repetitions while monotonous cannot be regarded as linguistic or grammatical malfunctions according to Manfred Görlach who writes that “Linguistically, the text is simple, often clumsy, **highly repetitive**, with short paratactic sentences, much as a child might write, or reminiscent of the simple structure of a pre-Renaissance English text” (Görlach, 1998, p. 139) [*Emphasis is mine*].

Examples of repetitions found in *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* are as dramatic as the rest of the book.

*“This was how I brought out **Death to the old man** who told me to go and bring him before he (**old man**) would tell me whereabouts my palm-wine tapster was that I was looking for before I reached that town and went to **the old man**”* (The PWD, p. 16)

*“Voilà comment j’ai rapporté **Mort au vieillard** qui m’avait dit d’aller le lui ramener avant **de me dire** où pouvait bien se trouver mon malafoutier que j’étais en train de chercher quand je suis arrivé dans cette ville et que j’ai rencontré **ce vieillard**”* (L’Ivrogne dans la brousse, p. 19)

*“He said furthermore that as I called myself “Father of gods who could do anything in this world,” this would be very easy for me to do; he said so” (The PWD, p.17)*

*“Il me dit de plus que du moment que je m’appelais moi-même Père-Des-Dieux-Qui-Peut-Tout-Faire-En-Ce-Monde, ça me serait très facile ; oui, voilà ce qu’il me dit.” (L’Ivrogne dans la brousse, p. 20)*

*“So after he had jumped very far away (luckily, I was there when he was doing all these things, and I saw the place that he threw both leaves separately) then I changed myself to a man as before, I went to the place that he threw both leaves, then I picked them up and went home at once” (The PWD, p.30)*

*“Une fois qu’il a sauté très très loin de là (heureusement que je me trouvais là tandis qu’il faisait toutes ces choses et que j’avais vu l’endroit où il avait jeté les deux feuilles l’une après l’autre), alors je me change en homme comme auparavant, je vais à l’endroit où il a jeté les deux feuilles, je les ramasse et je rentre aussitôt à la maison” (L’Ivrogne dans la brousse, p. 34)*

Queneau’s approach to translating the repetitious statements in *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* was essentially word for word with the exception of an equivalent sub-standard French. However, he did not cut off portions of the repetitions as might have

been expected following his free style approach but carefully rendered them all into conventional French.

In conclusion, it has been stated “that the contemporary Yoruba community and its oral traditional literature constitute the source of Tutuola’s material” (Afolayan, 1975, p. 202). This explains the somewhat ‘surreal’ nature of his tale which is a retelling of some of the oral traditions of the Yorubas and which makes for wordy and repetitive sentences in the English language.

#### ***d. Contradictory Statements***

In *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, the narrative is riddled with many contradictory statements which can cause momentary misunderstanding or a confused pause to readers. In his translator’s preface, Raymond Queneau mentions suppressing the urge “...de rationaliser un récit dont les ‘inconséquences’ et les ‘contradictions’ se glissent parfois dans la structure même des phrases” (Bush, 2012, p. 515). In *L’Ivrogne dans la brousse*, it can be seen that Queneau hardly attempted to correct the various contradictions. However, the following example is an exception to his approach. There is no doubt that the addition of ‘plus grand que’, in the statement below makes for a better language construction. However, the inconsistency in the translation approach taken by Queneau makes its definition or classification difficult.

*“But at the same time that the tiny creature commanded the weeds, all rose up as if the field was not cleared for two years. Then early in the morning **of the second day that we had cleared it, [...] a very tiny creature who was just a baby of one day of age and he commanded the weeds to rise up...**” (The PWD, pp. 49-50)*

*“Et le tout petit être n’a pas plutôt donné cet ordre aux mauvaises herbes, qu’elles repoussent toutes comme si le champ n’avait pas été sarclé depuis deux ans. De bon matin, **le lendemain du jour où nous avons sarclé le champ, [...] un tout petit être qui n’était pas plus grand qu’un bébé d’un jour et qui ordonne aux mauvaises herbes de pousser ...**” (L’Ivrogne dans la brousse, p. 56)*

In these other examples below, the contradictions remain.

*“But when my palm-wine tapster completed the period of 15 years that he was tapping the palm-wine for me, **then my father died suddenly,...**”. “So both of us reached my town safely **and I met my parents safely too,...**” (The PWD, pp. 7-8, 117)*

*“À **la mort de mon père**, il y avait quinze ans accomplis que mon malafoutier me préparait du vin de palme”. “Ainsi, tous les deux nous sommes arrivés sains et saufs dans ma ville natale **et je trouve mes parents en bonne santé aussi,...**” (L’Ivrogne dans la brousse, pp. 10, 133-134)*



*The Palm-Wine Drinkard* has few mentions of the *Drinkard's* father, yet, it is clearly reported that the father dies at the beginning of the book (p.7). The contradiction becomes obvious in the later part of the novel when the protagonist makes it back to his village with his wife and finds 'his parents' alive.

Here is another example of Queneau's translation that contains the exact same error originally made by Tutuola.

*"...but as this bed was terrible to look at or to sleep on it, I slept under it instead, because I knew his trick already." "To my surprise was that when it was about two o'clock in the midnight, there I saw somebody enter into the room cautiously with a heavy club in his hands,..." (The PWD, p. 14)*

*"...ce lit était terrible à voir, il était également terrifiant de coucher dessus, alors, au contraire, je me couche dessous, parce que je connaissais déjà le tour que Mort voulait me jouer." "Vers deux heures après minuit, je suis surpris de voir quelqu'un entrer subrepticement, une lourde massue à la main..." (L'Ivrogne dans la brousse, p. 16-17)*

The contradiction in the above excerpt is highlighted in the original text and its translation. The *Drinkard* expects what is to come but yet is surprised when Death actually makes an appearance with a club in his hands. Again, Queneau conveniently translates almost word for word. The contradictions are admittedly writing mistakes that were deliberately published. This begs the question of the motivation behind

Tutuola's publishers, reviewers and translator that energized them to achieve success for the then unknown writer? Could the response lie in an interest in the 'exotic' by the Western contemporaries of the 1950s? Or was it simply a need to create hierarchical literary structures and an opportunity to have a global reserve of literatures?

*e. Regular English sentence constructions*

The decision by the translator to render Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* into grammatically correct French causes perfect English sentence constructions by the author to be lost in translation. At first glance, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* may seem to be continually written with imperfect English, but an observant reader will note that perfectly phrased sentences are often interspersed with the more frequent broken English. However, Raymond Queneau's approach to translation leaves little room for Tutuola's striking language use. In occasions when Tutuola narrates through broken English, the translation is similar to the translation of the author's perfectly composed sentences. There is nothing in the translations of the various texts to indicate the stylishness or even, if you may, the literary naïveté of the author, Tutuola. The examples below prove the presence of standard English in *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*.

"...but they built their houses on the side of a steep hill,..." (*The PWD*, p. 58)

"...mais ils ont construit leurs maisons sur les pentes d'une colline abrupte,..."  
(*L'Ivrogne dans la brousse*, p. 67)

*“...both were vexed and went away, and they left the mouse there. Heaven returned to heaven his home and Land went back to his house on the earth.” (The PWD, p. 119)*

*“...tous les deux s’en vont fâchés et laissent la souris là. Ciel retourne chez lui au ciel et Sol retourne chez lui sur la terre” (L’Ivrogne dans la brousse, p. 136)*

When compared, the excerpts above and below reveal the hybridity of Tutuola’s literary work.

*“... and throughout that day **I felt not so happy as before; I was seriously sat down in my parlour, [...]**” (The PWD, p. 8)*

*“...et, durant toute cette journée-là, **je ne me sens plus aussi heureux qu’au-paravant; je reste assis tout chose dans mon salon, [...]**” (L’Ivrogne dans la brousse, p.10)*

Tutuola as a semi-literate could sometimes construct standard English, however the hybrid use of the language used in *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* is lost in Queneau’s translation for the translator’s primary goal was to achieve language fluency. His method had a lot of inconsistencies as his translations of *Contradictory Statements* (See preceding sub-heading) reveal, however, these inconsistencies do not really prevent an effortless comprehension of *L’Ivrogne dans la brousse*.

As a recap, odd and regular English statements from *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* are translated in the same manner, into grammatically correct French sentences, despite the

obvious difference in language construction. There are also no footnotes or commentaries left by the translator explaining these peculiarities.

There is also the matter of the irregularities of techniques used by Queneau in his translation. For although Queneau repeated the spelling error and some contradictory statements, he however did not attempt to use broken French in places where Amos Tutuola uses broken English and grammatically correct French in places where Tutuola uses grammatically correct English. The examples above, taken from the first edition by Faber and Faber Limited indicate that *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* is indeed interspersed with acceptable and conventional language.

An applicable theory for the practice of fluency in the field of Translation was discussed by the theorist, Lawrence Venuti and was termed ‘Domestication’ (discussed in greater detail in Chapter three). Domestication essentially refers to language fluency in the translation process. It is a norm for older and more developed national literatures to seek to domesticate foreign works from minority groups/cultures into their individual societies/cultures for reasons that range from hegemonic control to differences in speech patterns.

*Domestication* is said to be “an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to receiving cultural values, bringing the author back home” (Venuti, 1995, p. 15). It can be said that the theory of Domestication is evidently more practiced in translation because it is preferred by publishers, reviewers and readers. This may be attributed to the power each

has in determining the literary norms and conventions. This is further discussed in subsequent chapters.

### **1.5 Comparing *L'Ivrogne dans la brousse* to *Zazie dans le métro***

*Zazie dans le métro* is a popular fictional book written in 1960 by Raymond Queneau. One might argue that Tutuola's non-standard English does not have an equivalent language in French whose structure could be followed, yet a look at *Zazie dans le métro* also written by the translator will negate this argument. This can be explained simply by the use of popular language in *Zazie dans le métro* that was presumably spoken by the masses. The 'popular' language spoken by the less educated French populace was less formal and could also have been referred to as incorrect and/or sub-standard.

Similarities exist between the books written by Tutuola and Queneau. The *Drinkard* goes on a long adventure and encounters many difficult situations while in search of his dead palm-wine *tapster*. Similarly, the heroine in *Zazie dans le métro* travels to Paris for the first time from a smaller town. The book by Queneau was published in 1960, eight short years after the release of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*. That is to say that, not only was Queneau influenced by Tutuola's work, he was capable of rendering his translation of Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* using the French popular language in

appropriate areas of the text just as he was capable of using the language to write his book, *Zazie dans le métro*.

Queneau notably wrote more books than he translated. He can be described as more of a writer than a translator because his idiosyncracies as a writer were often manifested in his translation of Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*.

Queneau started his book with the word 'Doukipudonktan' which was described as a "barbaric looking word [...] the phonetic transcription of the question "D'où" est-ce qu'ils puent donc tant and a sample of Neo-French which has come to stand for the novel itself". (Armstrong, 1992, Vol. 22, No. 3, p. 4). 'Doukipudonktan' is a made-up word just as the word 'malafoutier' which also does not exist in standard French but originates from the Kituba tribe in the Congo. Other words are "Père-Des-Dieux-Qui-Peut-Tout-Faire-En-Ce-Monde" and "Ville-Céleste-D'ou-L'on-Ne-Revient-Pas" found in *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* and that are also fanciful versions of their originals.

As a reminder of the objective of this thesis, the burden has been to prove that a translator has to have a connection to both language pairs and cultures that s/he works with. However, the translator personally has to decide to form this bond with both the source and target texts. Therefore, Queneau's light handling or glossing over of *L'Ivrogne dans la brousse* may be his personal decision to stay unattached to the text as opposed to a need to follow laid down regulations that frowned upon the unconventional use of the French language.

Translators have been known to formulate new words in an attempt to increase the vocabulary of the language they are working into, usually their own. These acts ultimately enrich the given target language and culture and also ensure the preservation of the original in translation. André Lefevere corroborates this notion in the quote below:

“Bad translations render the letter without the spirit in a low and servile imitation. Good translations keep the spirit without moving away from the letter” (Lefevere, 1992, p.13).

## **2. LA FLÈCHE DE DIEU**

### **2.1 An introduction to Chinua Achebe and the novel *Arrow of God***

Chinua Achebe was born in Ogidi, Nigeria where he attended the Church Missionary Society (CMS) Primary School. He also went to the CMS central school in Owerri, the elite boy's boarding school in Umuahia and moved on to the University College at Ibadan. He had a well-rounded and progressive education that afforded him the opportunity to learn of life outside his immediate environment and to strive to put Africa in the literary limelight. By 1964 when the book, *Arrow of God* was published, Chinua Achebe had already published two critically acclaimed books, *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *No Longer at Ease* (1960). He also had a successful broadcasting career, serving as director of the External Service of the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation. *Arrow of God* was published four years after the Nigerian independence from Britain, and so Nigeria was still in her formative years. During and after the colonial era, Nigeria was constantly beset by regional and national conflicts. In the book, *Arrow of God*, there is a vivid depiction of war between two neighbouring villages, *Umuaro* and *Okperi*. There is also constant rivalry between characters in the novel, especially between the chief priest, Ezeulu and the representative of the colonial administration, Captain Winterbottom. Initially, the two men had an amicable relationship which was later ruined by 'differences in culture', that is to say that certain behavioural manners



considered normal in one culture could have negative connotations in another as was evident in the book. In a nutshell, all through the fictional tale, *Arrow of God* uses polar opposites to express the societal realities of the time. The rift that existed between the chief priest and the head of the colonial administration of Igboland is fundamental in the narrative, there was also the rift between the chief priest and his son because they stood on opposite sides of their beliefs, between the traditional dieties and the Christian God. The historical significance of Achebe's book goes a long way in the interest taken in the book, firstly, by *Présence Africaine*, publisher of *La Flèche de Dieu*, secondly, by the translator, Irène d'Almeida.

In the novel, Chinua Achebe tries objectively to capture the essence of African society and the effects of her colonization. He was a skilled rhetorician in life and in his works. The story is told in Pidgin English, Ibo<sup>6</sup> and English languages. Achebe's inclusion of lesser known languages like Ibo and Pidgin, is deliberate and serves as a historical representation of Nigeria. Achebe's work as a writer has been praised as having "helped Africa to find its own voice and to speak so eloquently that its message could resonate both locally and throughout the rest of the world" (Lindfors, 1997, Introduction). Achebe's resolve was not only to narrate stories but to publish the African situation in its past glories and its present difficulties. Therefore, he incorporates life's vivid issues

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<sup>6</sup>Ibo is a language spoken in the Eastern part of Nigeria, West Africa. *Language survey in Nigeria* (Bede Osaji, 1979).

using contemporary Nigerian lingua-francas which are in essence, English and Pidgin English. “His novels thus not only chronicle one hundred years of Nigerian history but also reflect the dominant African intellectual concerns of the past four decades” (Ibid).

*Arrow of God* serves as an academic tool and the text has been critically dissected and examined. In June 1973, the author, Michel Fabre posed a question to Achebe: “*You have written somewhere that you used English as a conscious artist, whereas Amos Tutuola, for instance, was a natural one. What do you mean by that?*” (Lindfors, 1997, p.51)

Achebe’s reply captured not only his thoughts on Amos Tutuola but also his thoughts on the role of English in his literatures:

*“Well, Tutuola has a fine instinct that helps him tell superb stories in a medium which is limited even by his knowledge of it. “Feather Woman of the Jungle” is proof of his talent. I say I am a conscious artist because I often make conscious attempts at recreating the turns and phrases of the vernacular while using English. Contrary to other writers of the English-speaking world, [...], I do not feel much kinship, basically, with the English tradition although I use the English language. [...] It is a very fine instrument...” (Ibid).*

Achebe's position on the use of language is extremely important to note because unlike Tutuola who tries to write in the best language possible for his semi-literate status, Achebe uses good English only when it fits with his own agenda. He constantly mixes indigenous Ibo words with regular English sentences without the aid of a glossary. In other scenarios, he makes the characters speak in Pidgin English and in indigenous idioms.

*"In dialogue, for example, a Westernized African character will never speak exactly like a European character nor will he speak like an illiterate village elder. Achebe, [...] is able to individualize his characters by differentiating their speech..." (Lindfors, 1973, p. 74)*

The book, *Arrow of God* exemplifies this principle of the author and from its first page, the Ibo word 'obi' is introduced.

*"His obi was built differently from other men's huts". (Arrow of God, p. 1).*

The treatment of the peculiarities of Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* in translation is further discussed in the article, "Literary Translation: The experience of translating Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* into French"<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup>Irene Assiba d'Almeida, *Literary Translation: The experience of translating Chinua Achebe's Arrow of God into French*, Meta: journal des traducteurs / Meta: Translators' Journal, vol. 27, n° 3, 1982, pp. 286-294. It is an article that details the challenges faced by the translator and the eventual resolution of these problems.

## 2.2 An introduction to Irène Assiba d’Almeida and the collaborator, Olga Mahougbé Simpson

The translator of *Arrow of God*, Irène Assiba d’Almeida worked in collaboration with Olga Mahougbé Simpson, a conference interpreter and citizen of the same country as Chinua Achebe. However, in the capacity in which they worked, d’Almeida took full responsibility for the translation and was the one who wrote of her experiences and discoveries in the article entitled “Literary Translation: The experience of translating Chinua Achebe’s *Arrow of God* into French”. D’Almeida frequently uses the first person plural of the subject pronoun ‘we’ and the possessive adjective ‘our’ in her expressions, to acknowledge the advisory role that Simpson played. The following excerpt from the afore-mentioned article stands out as an example to support the collaborative effort put into the translation of *Arrow of God* by d’Almeida and Simpson. “Perhaps one of the most teasing problems was to translate the passages which the writer elected to render in Pidgin English. **After much deliberation we have chosen** to invent a kind of gibberish as it were...” (D’Almeida, 1982, pp. 291-292) [Emphasis is mine].

In her article “The meaning and status of international studies in West-African schools”, d’Almeida provides a brief autobiography of herself. She was instructed in International studies in Sénégal and later in Bénin and as such was exposed to a world outside of Africa from a tender age. As an adult, she moved to Nigeria, where she became a

lecturer at the University of Calabar. Her years in Bénin, Sénégal and Nigeria could explain her choice in translating the book: *Arrow of God*. In the article earlier mentioned, she candidly expresses her disillusionment with the biased learning system under which she grew up which assumed that there was no education in Africa prior to colonization and the near exclusion of Africa in Western pedagogy. She writes:

*“I, myself, am a product of the colonial school and everything I learned emphasized international studies but international studies that, ironically, excluded Africa... In history, for instance, it was only in the first year of secondary school that we ever learned anything about Africa. The curriculum dealt with the great civilizations of Egypt and some oriental countries...”* (D’Almeida, vol.xxi, no.3, p. 195).

One can surmise that d’Almeida’s experiences growing up led her to actively focus on portraying Africa in a new and positive light. A decision that also influenced her approach to translating *Arrow of God*.

As earlier mentioned, some of her decisions and individual conclusions on the translation act are compiled in the article “Literary Translation: The experience of translating Chinua Achebe’s *Arrow of God* into French”. Here, she writes about her peculiar style and the reasons behind her translation practices. Her practices include the preservation of African idioms and oratories, the introduction of new words, her deliberate retention of original names in the Ibo language and her preservation of words originally written in Ibo, sometimes followed by French interpretations depending on

what is in the original novel. She was devoted to all the languages (English, Ibo and Pidgin English) used by the author, most likely in hopes of staying true to the author and passing across an active imagery of life in Africa to a French-speaking audience.

### **2.3 Comparing the translations of regular English sentence constructions into the French language to the translations of Rhetoric, Proverbs and African idioms**

D'Almeida's renditions of regular English texts into the French language are often literal and follow the form and meaning intended by the author. This can be attributed to Achebe's fluent English constructions. Although, Achebe did indeed use the English language "to carry the weight of *his* African experience" (Achebe, 1975, p.62), his meaning was clear and direct. For instance, when he used his native tongue, *Ibo* or Pidgin English, he ensured the clarity of the hybrid word or sentence within a contextual whole. The characters of the book express their thoughts through the following mediums: rhetoric, African idioms and proverbs.

However, there are regular English expressions that do not fit into any of the above categories. The aim here is to use some of these regular English statements in juxtaposition with the figurative expressions that come in forms named in the subheading just above:

*“Ezeulu went into his barn and took down one yam from the bamboo platform built specially for the twelve sacred yams. There were eight left.” (Arrow of God, p.3)*

*Ezeulu entra dans son grenier et fit descendre un tubercule d'igname de l'étagère spécialement réservée aux douze ignames sacrées. Il en restait huit” (La Flèche de Dieu, p.13)*

*“I want to know who told you because I don't think he can tell the difference between the face of a diety and the face of a Mask” (Arrow of God, p.5)*

*“Je voudrais savoir qui vous l'a dit, car je pense que cette personne ne sait pas faire la distinction entre le visage d'une divinité et celui d'un Masque” (La Flèche de Dieu, p.16)*

*“There were murmurs of approval and of disapproval but more of approval from the assembly of elders and men of title” (Arrow of God, p.16)*

*“Des murmures d'approbation et de désapprobation, et beaucoup plus de murmures d'approbation, se firent entendre dans l'assemblée des anciens et hommes à titre” (La Flèche de Dieu, p.29)*

*“Perhaps it was out of pique that he had said that the carving done by the one was about as good as the medicine practised by the other” (Arrow of God, p.148)*

*“Peut-être était-ce par dépit qu’il avait un jour dit que les sculptures de l’un étaient presque aussi bonnes que la médecine pratiquée par l’autre” (La Flèche de Dieu, p.198)*

It can be said that d’Almeida has a perfect grasp of both the English and French languages because even as she is faithful to the source text, she does not allow her translations to sound simplified. In the translations of regular English sentences into French, there is respect for the rules of both languages, which makes for an easy read. Furthermore, it is important to note that the clear and balanced translations between correct English and French, allows for a distinction to be made between English, Ibo and Pidgin English statements. In other words, the translation by d’Almeida defies the norms of fluency and stands out to a reader and will most likely create interest in the reader to know more about the original work. In this case, a translation reads as a translation and not as the original. Fluency as a tool used by publishers and reviewers to evaluate the aesthetic nature of a translation, becomes nonessential, and it is instead replaced by the need for an accurate rendering of the source text. This method/approach of/to translation is particularly stressed in postcolonial writing because the aim for such writings is usually to escape obscurity. Writers of postcolonial literature as Chinua Achebe and Amos Tutuola hope to pass across their world views, cultures and traditions, and a glossing over of the differences in the original text during the translation process defeats that aim.



**f. The use of Rhetoric**

Rhetoric is “the art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing, especially the use of figures of speech and other compositional techniques” (Oxford dictionary, 2016). An example is taken from *Arrow of God*.

*“‘But there is one thing which is not clear to me in this summons. Perhaps it is clear to others; if so someone should explain it to me. Ezeulu has told us that the white ruler has asked him to go to Okperi. Now it is not clear to me whether it is wrong for a man to ask his friend to visit him. When we have a feast do we not send for our friends in other clans to come and share it with us, and do they not also ask us to their own celebrations? The white man is Ezeulu’s friend and has sent for him. What is so strange about that? He did not send for me. He did not send for Udeozo; he did not send for the priest of Idemili; he did not send for the priest of Eru; he did not send for the priest of Udo nor did he ask the priest of Ogwugwu to come and see him. He has asked Ezeulu. Why? Because they are friends. Or does Ezeulu think that their friendship should stop short of entering each other’s houses? Does he want the white man to be his friend only by word of mouth? Did not our elders tell us that as soon as we shake hands with a leper he will want an embrace? It seems to me that Ezeulu has shaken hands with a man of white body’. This brought low murmurs of applause and even some laughter”*  
*(Arrow of God, p.143)*

“Mais pour ce qui est de cet appel il y a une chose que je ne comprends pas très bien. Peut-être que les autres comprennent alors quelqu’un devrait me donner des explications. Ezeulu nous a dit que le chef blanc lui a demandé d’aller à Okperi. Eh bien, je ne comprends pas ce qu’il y a de mal, quand un homme demande à son ami de lui rendre visite. Quand nous faisons une fête, est-ce que nous ne demandons pas à nos amis des clans voisins de venir se réjouir avec nous? Et ne nous demandent-ils pas d’assister à leurs propres réjouissances? L’homme blanc est l’ami d’Ezeulu et lui a demandé de venir le voir. Y a -t- il quelque chose d’étrange à cela? Il ne m’a pas invité. Il n’a pas invité Udéozo, il n’a pas invité le prêtre d’Idemili; il n’a pas invité le prêtre d’Eru; il n’a pas invité le prêtre d’Odo, ni celui d’Ogwugwu à aller le voir. Il a invité Ezeulu, pourquoi? Parce qu’ils sont amis. Ou bien Ezeulu croit-il que leur amitié devrait s’arrêter au portail de leurs maisons respectives? Veut-il que l’homme blanc ne soit son ami qu’en paroles? Nos anciens ne nous disent-ils pas que dès que l’on serre la main à un lépreux, il veut qu’on l’embrasse! Il me semble que Ezeulu a serré la main à un homme au corps blanc...’ A ces mots, il y eut des murmures d’approbation et même quelques rires” (La Flèche de Dieu, p. 192)

The rhetoric is often long because it is a speech of persuasion. The African rhetoric usually follows a pattern: the salutation, the introduction and the attempt to persuade others through vigorous explanations using figurative expressions, puns, proverbs, etc.

In the above citation, a whole speech is rendered in translation as a single statement as it is in the original and it is carefully analysed below:

*“... Did not our elders tell us that as soon as we shake hands with a leper he will want an embrace? It seems to me that Ezeulu has shaken hands with a man of white body”.* (Arrow of God, p.143) (Emphasis is mine).

In the case of the figurative expressions above, there was a need for D’Almeida to get a close meaning in French. She succeeds in translating the idiomatic expression as:

*“Nos anciens ne nous disent-ils pas que dès que l’on serre la main à un lépreux, il veut qu’on l’embrasse!”* (La Flèche de Dieu, p. 192)

However, D’Almeida had a little more difficulty in translating the pun which she renders as:

*“...à un homme au corps blanc...”* (La Flèche de Dieu, p. 192)

(Pun as used in the above excerpts need further clarification. An explanation will come by way of the book's characters. Ezeulu, the chief priest summons the elders of his community in response to the summons he got himself from the colonial governor, Winterbottom. This is however met with scorn from Nwaka, one of the respected village elders in *Umuaro*, the village in which most of the story is set. In his speech, he blames Ezeulu for befriending the ‘white man’. The play on words of “a man of white body” meaning ‘leper’ and ‘white man’ is only evident in terms of the color, ‘white’. The cultural undertones point to the distant relationship one maintains with a leper, just as one was expected to keep away from the white man and vice-versa.

D’Almeida is led to use ‘Ellipsis’ which is “a series of **dots (typically three**, such as "...") that usually indicates an intentional omission of a word, sentence, or whole section from a text without altering its **original meaning**. (Wikipedia dictionary, 2016) (Emphasis is mine). Notwithstanding, the translation cannot be considered as inadequate because it lacks the pretentiousness of a false translation. That is to say that D’Almeida’s use of ellipsis effectively brings the reader to a pause. There is an acknowledgement of ‘something more’ in the message of the original text that surpassed the target language's ability to convey.

#### ***g. The use of Proverbs***

A proverb is a “short pithy saying in general use, stating a general truth or piece of advice” (Oxford dictionary, 2016).

*“I told him that he should have spoken up against what we were planning, **instead of which he put a piece of live coal into the child’s palm and ask him to carry it with care**”<sup>8</sup> (Arrow of God, p.26)*

*“Je lui avais dit qu’il aurait dû être contre ce que nous projetions; **au lieu de cela, il confia un charbon ardent à un enfant et lui demanda de le tenir avec soin**” (La Flèche de Dieu, p. 41)*

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<sup>8</sup>Bold highlights in the excerpts are deliberate. It points out the figurative expressions in sentences that also have regular English sentence constructions.

*“The fly that perches on a mound of dung may strut around as it likes, it cannot move the mound” (Arrow of God, p.130)*

*“La mouche qui est perchée sur un tas de crottes peut faire la belle patte autour tant qu’elle veut, mais elle ne peut pas déplacer le tas” (La Flèche de Dieu, p. 175-176)*

*“The man who brings ant-infested faggots into his hut should not grumble when lizards begin to pay him a visit” (Arrow of God, p.132)*

*“L’homme qui a ramené des fagots remplis de fourmis ne doit pas rechigner quand les lézards commencent à lui rendre visite” (La Flèche de Dieu, p. 177)*

*“A man might pick his way with the utmost care through a crowded market but find that the hem of his cloth had upset and broken another’s wares; in such a case the man, not his cloth, was held to repair the damage” (Arrow of God, p.176)*

*“Un homme peut, à travers un marché bondé de monde, choisir son chemin avec la plus grande précaution; mais il peut arriver que le bord de son vêtement renverse et casse les marchandises de quelqu’un. Dans ce cas-là, c’est bien l’homme et non le vêtement que l’on attrape pour réparer les dégâts” (La Flèche de Dieu, p. 232)*

Proverbs such as the ones above are often spoken in specific places in a specific manner which is why d’Almeida also translated in an ‘esoteric manner’. They tell a certain story. The original is neither literal, nor is the translation. However, the meaning of the proverbs can be drawn in context from the clear English and French sentences.

#### ***h. The use of African idiomatic expressions***

Idioms are “a group of words established by usage as having a meaning not deducible from those of the individual words”. They are also “a form of expression natural to a language, person, or group of people” (Oxford dictionary, 2016). In the case of *Arrow of God*, both Oxford dictionary definitions are applicable. Idioms are understood by certain people who share a language and usually a heritage. Examples of African idioms in *Arrow of God* include:

*“You can now see, **Son of our Daughter**, that we cannot get our elders together before tomorrow [...] If war came suddenly to your town how do you call your men together, **Father of my mother?**...”* (*Arrow of God*, p.23)

*“Tu peux te rendre compte à présent, «**Fils de notre Fille**», que nous ne pouvons pas rassembler nos notables avant demain [...] Si la guerre éclatait soudain dans votre village, comment rassembleriez-vous vos hommes «**Père de ma Mère**»?...”* (*La Flèche de Dieu*, p. 38)

*“Today the world is spoilt and there is no longer head or tail in anything that is done”* (*Arrow of God*, p.27)

*“Aujourd’hui, le monde est pourri et les choses qui se font n’ont ni tête, ni queue”* (*La Flèche de Dieu*, p. 42)

*“Although they were not yet satisfied they could say without shame that Akukalia’s death had been avenged, **that they had provided him with three men on whom to rest his head**” (Arrow of God, p.28)*

*“Bien qu’ils ne fussent pas encore satisfaits, ils pouvaient dire sans honte que la mort d’Akukalia avait été vengée et **qu’ils lui avaient donné trois hommes sur lesquels il pouvait reposer sa tête**” (La Flèche de Dieu, p. 44)*

*“He did not recognize Ezeulu who on entering had greeted those in the room with his eyes alone” (Arrow of God, p.113)*

*“Il ne reconnut pas Ezeulu qui, lorsqu’il entra, salua seulement des yeux les gens qui étaient dans la chambre...” (La Flèche de Dieu, p. 154)\*

*“If they listen to me, o-o; if they refuse to listen, o-o” (Arrow of God, p.132)*

*“S’ils m’écoutent o-ho-o, s’ils refusent de m’écouter, o-ho-o” (La Flèche de Dieu, p. 178)*

In summary, the translations of rhetoric, African idioms and proverbs closely follow the original text. Although there is a difference between regular English statements and figurative expressions, the translation approach is essentially the same, as they are both source-oriented. This is because d’Almeida finds ways to avoid changing the meaning of Ibo proverbs and idioms by translating them into equivalent French proverbs and norms, that is, if that were indeed possible. It is important to note that the Ibo language

proverbs and speech patterns may greatly vary from, say, Tutuola's Yoruba in formulation. Therefore, d'Almeida's approach to translation was literal and it took into account the lexical structure, the form and meaning of these esoteric expressions.

The direct translation of rhetoric, proverbs and idioms can be seen as a subversion of the literary hegemony in which some translators attempt to avoid bringing in the foreign into a target language so as not to upset the translational norms of the day. Taking the literal approach meant that when an Ibo word was found in a sentence, it was preserved in translation.

#### **2.4 Language manipulation: from Pidgin English to le *Pidgin Français* and from Ibo language to Ibo language**

The only translational style that takes a different approach to the literal practice adopted by d'Almeida is as regards the translation of Pidgin English. She acknowledged that "Pidgin English is indeed a language in its own right with its lexical and syntactic peculiarities" (D'Almeida, 1982, p.254). In the absence of an equivalent language, d'Almeida chose "a kind of French gibberish as it were..." called 'Français petit nègre'<sup>9</sup> which is a derogatory term. However, the language is spoken by "...some people who, for one reason or the other did not master French..." (D'Almeida, 1982, p.254).

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid, (p. 293) A vernacular French that D'Almeida uses as an equivalent to Pidgin English. The term is used by linguists to refer to the poor or approximate French spoken by illiterate speakers of French in Africa. (Alexandre, 1972, p. 59).



While, the use of the word ‘derogatory’ for the *semi-* Pidgin French “français petit nègre” should be called into question, it however does not eliminate its suitability in representing Pidgin English. Although both languages were formulated in the exact same social condition, Pidgin English notably enjoys a higher status than “français petit nègre”, from a historical point of view.

It is documented in Anthropological Linguistics that:

*“All African countries where English is used as the language of education and administration have developed local standard varieties, and all have sub-standard or partially learned types of this standard, but only along the West African coast are there non-standard varieties with sufficient autonomy of structure to be studied as pidgins and creoles, languages whose norms are independent from those of Metropolitan English. (Gilman, 1980, Vol. 22, No. 9, p. 363).*

Pidgins were a result of colonial imposition and it seems fit that the languages should be used in a vice-versa position during translation of African creative works.

“Français petit nègre” might also be called “français pidginisé”. It is a mixture of French and indigenous languages. This often leads to several dialects of both pidginized English and French, according to the geographical location where the language was formulated. It is further discussed in the extract below:

*“Cette variété de français a existé dans toutes les possessions françaises d’Afrique. Elle est née des premières interactions langagières entre colons et populations indigènes*

*dans trois types de situation: les lieux de travail, l'armée et l'école. Sur les lieux de travail et les chantiers, une partie des allogènes colons qu'on appelait « les petits blancs » ou petits colons, relativement plus nombreux que ceux de la haute société coloniale, étaient en contact permanent avec les Africains d'origines ethniques et linguistiques diverses. Ces petits colons exerçaient des responsabilités intermédiaires dans l'armée, la fonction publique ou étaient directeurs d'entreprises agricoles, commerciales. Au sein de ce groupe se développe une variété de français simple et rudimentaire. On l'a appelé « petit-nègre » parce que, selon l'idéologie de l'époque, il était adapté à la mentalité des Noirs» (Kouadio N'Guessan, 2008, p.192)*

Examples of translations from Pidgin English to Français petit nègre follow:

*“Sometine na dat two porson we cross for road” said the corporal. “Sometine na dem” said his companion. “But we no go return back jus like dat. All dis waka wey we waka come here no fit go for nating”. The corporal thought about it. The other continued: “Sometine na lie dem de lie, I no wan make dem put trouble for we head” (Arrow of God, p. 153-154)*

*«C'est pê-ête les deux hommes-là nous rencontrer sur la route», dit le caporal. “Pê-ête, c'est eux”, répondit son compagnon. “Mais nous pas retourner comme ça. Tout cette marche, nous marcher!. Ça peut pas ête pour rien”. Le caporal réfléchit. L'autre continua: “Pê-ête eux mentir. Moi veux pas eux mete palabre sur nos têtes». (La Flèche de Dieu, p.204-205)*

*“I use to tellam say blackman juju no be something wey man fit take play. But when I tellam na so so laugh im de laugh. When he finish laugh he call me John and I say Massa. He say you too talk bush talk. I tellam say O-o, one day go be one day. You no see now?” (Arrow of God, p.155)*

*« Moi dire lui que gri-gri de l’homme noir ête quelque chose avec quoi personne y doit jouer. Mais quand moi dire lui, lui rire, rire seulement. Quand lui fini rire, lui dit “John” et moi répond “Missié” y dit moi aussi parler comme broussard. Moi dis lui! “O-o, un jour va vini...et on va voir. Ti voi maintenant?» (La Flèche de Dieu, p. 206).*

In the translation of Pidgin English into the French language, d’Almeida’s approach is not literal. This can be attributed, firstly, to huge differences between Pidgin English and the *English* language which might have served as the intermediary language during translation, secondly, to variations of Pidgins. In translating Pidgin English, an African lingua-franca, d’Almeida had to first of all understand and express both languages, no doubt assisted by her collaborator, Mahougbé Simpson.

On the subject of the translations of Ibo language in *La Flèche de Dieu*, d’Almeida endeavors to preserve them in translation. Her reasoning centers around the actions of the author, himself, when she says: “quite a number of Ibo words are not

understandable. Perhaps a glossary would have been an asset but Achebe himself did not provide the reader with one in the original”<sup>10</sup>. Nevertheless, as a translator, d’Almeida could still have opted to provide a glossary of the foreign words for an intended audience but she chose not to, following the author’s example. The lack of a glossary, however, did not hinder comprehension of the text as Ibo words were often accompanied by an explanation of sorts. Below are some examples:

*“Give me the omu” Edogo passed the tender palm leaves to him [...] “Let me have ego-nano”. She untied a bunch of cowries from a corner of her cloth and gave them to him.*  
(*Arrow of God*, p. 119)

*“Donne moi l’omu. Edogo lui passa les jeunes feuilles de palmier [...] Puis-je avoir l’ego-nano? Elle défit le bout de son pagne et lui donna une poignée de cauris. (La Flèche de Dieu, p. 160)*

*“Umuago celebrated their **Mgba Agbogho** or the **wrestling of the Maidens** [...] Together the six villages held the quiet retreat called **Oso Nwanadi** to placate the **resentful spirits of kinsmen killed in war** or in other ways made to suffer death in the cause of Umuaro”* (*Arrow of God*, p. 193)

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<sup>10</sup> Irene Assiba d’Almeida, *Literary Translation: The experience of translating Chinua Achebe’s Arrow of God into French*, Meta: journal des traducteurs / Meta: Translators' Journal, vol. 27, n° 3, 1982, p. 254

*“Les habitants d’Umuagu célébraient leur **Mgba Agbogho** ou **Lutte des vierges** [...] Les six villages observaient une retraite silencieuse appelée **Oso Nwanadi** pour apaiser les esprits irrités de leurs frères tués au cours d’une guerre ou qui, en d’autres circonstances, étaient morts pour la cause d’Umuaro” (La Flèche de Dieu, p. 254)*

On another note, the occurrence of certain words in a language that are not present in another can lead to problems in translation. It is a fact that has been well documented in Translation Studies. It was termed “cultural untranslatability” by J.C. Catford in his 1960’s *A linguistic theory of translation: an essay in applied linguistics*. It has been explained as “when a situational feature, functionally relevant for the SL text, is completely absent from the culture of which the TL is a part” (Catford, 1960, p. 99). d’Almeida’s encounter with cultural differences was dealt with, in much the same way as the author. The author, Achebe, often ensures contextual understanding of indigenous words, likewise, d’Almeida, replicates these words as they appear in the original text with explanations of their significance. Examples are shown above, such as *omu* and *ego-nano*.

### 3. POSTCOLONIAL AFRICAN LITERATURES AND TRANSLATION THEORIES

*“Various well-known problems of translation can be related to marked features of post-colonial writing. There are, for example, often perturbations in the lexis of a translation. In source texts to be translated, translators are presented with aspects of the source culture that are unfamiliar to the receiving audience – elements of the material culture (such as foods, tools, garments), social structures (including customs and law), features of the natural world (weather conditions, plants, animals), and the like; such features of the source culture are often encoded in specific lexical items for which there are no equivalents in the receptor culture or for which there are only extremely rare or technical words. In the face of such a crux, a translator has a variety of choices: to omit the reference or pick some ‘equivalent’ in the receptor culture on the one hand, and on the other to import the word untranslated (with an explanation in a footnote perhaps), add an explanatory classifier or an explicit explanation, use a rare or recondite word of the receiving language, extend the semantic field of a word in the receptor language, and so on.” (Tymoczko, 1999, pp.24-25).*

Literary activity in Africa has been enhanced by translation. It has undoubtedly been a tool to pass across the ‘true’<sup>11</sup> version of the African story, a tool to retell the tale afore told by non-Africans. In the field of Translation studies, theories have been propagated to fit the African situation. Paul Bandia, a known theorist in Translation studies has written extensively in this area. He theorizes the translation of African European language literatures as:

*“a two tier approach to intercultural translation” involving a “primary level” in which the African writer transposes his thoughts, which come more naturally to him in his vernacular African language (i.e., the oral narrative) into an alien European language; and the “secondary level” where the translator transfers “the African thought from one European language to another” (Bandia, 2008, p.165).*

For African literatures that center on oral tradition (or cultural information that has been passed down from generation to generation), the authors first have to do a decoding from the indigenous language into a viable language, such as English. Writing for most authors from postcolonial societies involves a translation process. Taking an example from the case study, Tutuola’s tale of a wandering man who journeys to and from the land of the dead is not a weird tale in Nigeria, West Africa, as it was perceived in other parts of the world. Children of African descent usually grow up with knowledge of the

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<sup>11</sup> ‘True version’ can be explained by the following citation: “Early discussions of European-language translations in Africa were mostly about the works of Western anthropologists, linguists, administrators and missionaries who sought to translate the African world view steeped in oral tradition into a Western language culture. (Bandia, 2008)

same or similar stories. An analysis of Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* has already been done in a previous chapter and shows how his language structure is often close to that of the Yoruba language (Afolayan, 1975).

In other cases, African writers who are conversant with both the vernacular and the European language "...may resort to specific language practices designed to sustain the Africanness of their work" (Bandia, 2008, p.166).

It is not unusual to find indigenous words and/or statements riddling African postcolonial works. Some authors find personal gratification in including variations of European languages, such as Pidgin English in their literary works. Writers of postcolonial literature have several reasons for their actions which may include the following: As a way of leaving a mark on the literary field, as a means of self-identification and as an opportunity to show off or celebrate their cultures and traditions to or with the rest of the world.

In continuation of the discussion on Bandia's Primary and Secondary levels of the translation process, there is always the need for both levels to be in synchrony. This ensures that the author is neither lost in the oral narrative nor in a Westernized literary style but instead forges a niche for himself/herself. In a nutshell, Bandia concludes that "translating African creative works is a source-text oriented translation process in which the target language, the European language, is modified to accommodate the African



world-view” (Bandia, 1993, vol. 6, n° 2, p. 74). In other words, in the primary level, African literary works often contain cultural references. The translator of the secondary level of translation (between two European languages) must “...ensure that both the translator and the reader are receiving the message at the level of the source-text culture” (Bandia, 1993, vol. 6, No.2, p.55), beyond the primary level into the level of oral tradition.

African literatures are diverse and so are the languages used. However, most literary African works often appear in two or more of the following languages: Indigenous languages (such as Yoruba, Swahili, Gikuyu, or Ibo), Pidgin English, English, French, Arabic, Portuguese, etc. Following some of the earlier practices of translation of African works, the presence of two or more languages in a book does not mean that these languages will all have literal translations in the target language. A translator, must therefore decide between rewriting the source text after the literary style and grammatical structure of the target language, in order to enhance language fluency or to remain faithful to the letter and form of the source text to the detriment of the target text and language. This is shown in the case study: *L’Ivrogne dans la brousse* and *La Flèche de Dieu*. In chapter one and two of this thesis, several excerpts from these books are cited as examples. Here, they will be referenced as a way to buttress the relevance of African post-colonial theory to its literatures.

Amos Tutuola’s *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* was written in a quasi-form of English. A language that can neither be wholly classified under English nor Pidgin English,

although influenced by both languages. It has been explained in the first chapter, the role played by the Yoruba language in sentence constructions. Several statements are repeated in accordance with the mode of expression of the Yorubas.

*“This was how I brought out Death to the old man who told me to go and bring him before he (old man) would tell me whereabouts my palm-wine tapster was that I was looking for before I reached that town and went to the old man” (The PWD, p. 16)*

*“Voilà comment j’ai rapporté Mort au vieillard qui m’avait dit d’aller le lui ramener avant de me dire où pouvait bien se trouver mon malafoutier que j’étais en train de chercher quand je suis arrivé dans cette ville et que j’ai rencontré ce vieillard” (L’ivrogne dans la brousse, p. 19)*

A careful analysis of the example above will reveal that Queneau’s translation affected the repetition/meaning in the source language but not the style/presentation/form of the source text. The text:

*“...would tell me whereabouts my tapster was that I was looking for...”*

becomes;

*“...m’avait dit d’aller le lui ramener avant de me dire où pouvait bien se trouver mon malafoutier que j’étais en train de chercher...”*

Queneau's approach to the translation of the text can be related to his sociological background. As a translator, Queneau may have understood English but not its variants and so, it becomes easier to retranslate the text into simpler English before finally translating into French. The French texts are easily understood and in places where convenient, Queneau interjects a bit of the style and presentation of the original text as the example above shows. His style is eloquently explained by the following statement:

*"Moreover, translation is a highly manipulative activity that involves all kinds of stages in that process of transfer across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Translation is not an innocent, transparent activity but is highly charged with significance at every stage; it rarely, if ever, involves a relationship of equality between texts, authors or systems"* (Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999, p. 2).

In another vein, Achebe's hybrid languages can be classified between Pidgin English, Ibo and English. In his works, these languages are often used with proverbs and African idioms. An example of a proverb is given below for analysis.

*"I told him that he should have spoken up against what we were planning, **instead of which he put a piece of live coal into the child's palm and ask him to carry it with care**"*<sup>12</sup> (*Arrow of God*, p.26)

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<sup>12</sup> Bold highlights are deliberate. It points out the figurative expressions in sentences that also have regular English sentence constructions.

*“Je lui avais dit qu’il aurait dû être contre ce que nous projetions; **au lieu de cela, il confia un charbon ardent à un enfant et lui demanda de le tenir avec soin**” (La Flèche de Dieu, p. 41)*

It was somewhat easier for the translator d’Almeida because Achebe was a gifted writer and could easily manipulate the English language to his literary needs. d’Almeida often did a direct translation into French because the original was expressive enough. The proverb above depicts the same story in French as in English. It is a literal translation. However, in cases where Pidgin English is used, d’Almeida introduces “français petit nègre”. In this case, her translation is neither uniformed nor fluent because apart from her choice to use an equivalent language for Pidgin English which was an appropriate choice, she also retains italicized Ibo words in her translation as they appear in the original. Several examples are given in the preceding chapter.

A parallel relationship can be drawn between the translation approaches and sociological backgrounds of Raymond Queneau and Irène d’Almeida/Olga Mahougbé as between Ethnocentric and Ethnodeviant translations, Free and Literal translations, Dominant and Minority languages and cultures.

Ethnocentric methods of handling African literatures are usually about refining the content, removing the non-Western. Antoine Berman in the article “La traduction et la lettre”, succinctly defines ethnocentrism as “qui ramène tout à sa propre culture, à ses

normes et valeurs, et considère ce qui est situé en dehors de celle-ci – l’Etranger – comme négative ou tout juste bon à être annexé, adapté, pour accroître la richesse de cette culture” (Berman, 1985, pp. 48-49). Venuti defines ethnocentric translations to be a “reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, bringing the author back home” (Venuti, 1995, p.15). On the other hand, ethnodeviant methods are a lot less intrusive. This means that an ethnodeviant translator prioritizes the source text over the target text and treats it as sacred. If the translator has to modify the source text in any way, it is usually for the benefit of the source text. As an example, the use of *Français petit nègre* in the translation of *Pidgin English*, discussed above. Enormous focus is directed at foreignizing a translation by users of ethnodeviant theory. This is simply done by retaining cultural nuances, through the practice of importation of untranslated text, calquing, footnotes and so on, that might otherwise be lost when fluent translations are prioritized. The definition by Venuti considers it a “pressure [...] to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad” (Venuti, 1995, p. 15).

A juxtaposition of the above terms Ethnodeviant and Ethnocentric will place *La Flèche de Dieu* as an ethnodeviant-type translation because it chooses to go against the norms of fluency but follows the postcolonial norms of showcasing the cultural values of a given minority group, which in this case are African traditions and beliefs. *L’Ivrogne dans la brousse* falls under an ethnocentric-type translation as a result of the obvious differences between the original work and the translated text.

Writers from minority cultures often desire to tell the world their stories or narrate their traditions using peculiar literary styles and when these works undergo translations, a pre-requisite as suggested by Schleiermacher, Berman, Venuti and a host of other translation theorists, is to follow the theory of foreignization as opposed to domestication. In applying ethnodeviant theory in translation, a translator of a postcolonial literary piece while translating into a dominant language and culture would adhere to source-oriented translation theories and allow for foreignization techniques in the translation.

### **3.1 Hybrid texts**

Hybridity comes about in cultural diversity. It is a claim of identity. It is a voice for minority groups who seek to remove themselves from obscurity. Hybridity in literature is characterized by the use of multiple languages. Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* explains hybridity when he notes that

*“postcolonial discourse in terms of mimicry, hybridity, sly civility, is [...] this liminal moment of identification, eluding resemblance, produces a subversive strategy of subaltern agency that negotiates its own authority through a process of iterative ‘unpicking’ and incommensurable, insurgent relinking” (Bhabha, 1994, p.132)*

The books of this case study are a showcase of hybrid texts. *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* has been established as a hybrid fiction due to the use of language that has been referred to as Yoruba English. *Arrow of God* is undoubtedly a hybrid novel, with a mix of three languages, English, Pidgin English and the Ibo language.

The excerpts presented in chapters one and two expound on the term: Hybridity. They demonstrate the inherent hybrid forms or multilingual character of African postcolonial fiction. Hybridity is a constant feature in most postcolonial works. One of the theories on minority cultures/literatures describes linguistic hybridity as “a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other ‘denied’ knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority, its rules of recognition” (Bhabha, 1994, p.114). In relation to minority cultures, Bandia gives the African perspective when he explains that some writers “seek to assert Africanness by marking the presence of African languages and vernaculars in their work...” (Bandia, 2008, p.151).

Hybridity is a common occurrence in African works because the literatures often contain a multiplicity of languages. Sometimes they are explained, other times they are not, and might even be placed randomly in fictional texts. This method of writing is first and foremost an assertion of cultural identity<sup>13</sup> and/or individuality on a literary

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<sup>13</sup> “Cultural identity is the [...] feeling of belonging to a group. It is part of a person’s self-conception and self-perception and is related to nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, generation, locality or any kind of social group that has its own distinct culture. In this way, cultural identity is both characteristic of the **individual** but also

piece. Hybridity in this form has been termed “relexification” by Chantal Zabus and it has been defined as “a conscious, deliberate method of indigenization” (Zabus, 1991, p. 102).

### 3.2 Case study: *L’Ivrogne dans la brousse* and *La Flèche de Dieu*

Hybridity in the translations *L’Ivrogne dans la brousse* and *La Flèche de Dieu* is shown in different ways and on several dimensions. The use of hybrid language in the fictional texts is often deliberate as in the case of Achebe’s *Arrow of God*, however it can also result from an unconscious effort, for example: Tutuola’s *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*. Salman Rushdie’s concept of ‘translated men’ explains the latter statement. This means that, a postcolonial writer is often exposed to two or more languages and cultures, a fact that is often evidenced in his/her works. In the case of Tutuola who talks about *ball rooms* and *Technicolour* even as he narrates an oral tradition in his fictional tale, the influence of both his indigenous background and the colonial era becomes apparent.

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of the **culturally identical group of members sharing the same cultural identity**” (Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural\_identity, 2017). [Emphasis is mine].



#### 4. AGENCY IN TRANSLATION STUDIES

In the field of Translation, the term, ‘agency’ is in relation to discussions on the role translators, publishers and readers (audience) play in the outcome of any given translation.

When it comes to the choice of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* for translation, one must consider its popularity in England and the U.S.A. at the time. The popular poet and critic, Dylan Thomas and others such as Eric Larrabee and Eric Robinson had written powerful reviews on the book that piqued the interests of readers all over the world. Therefore, there existed an already made audience in France and the francophone countries that awaited the translation of the book into a language that they understood. The original book had done the job of increasing curiosity in African works, creating an avid interest in the ‘exotic’ people of Africa, but the job of satisfying the curiosity of peoples from various parts of the world fell squarely on the shoulders of translators.

#### 4.1 Translators as Agents

*The Palm-Wine Drinkard* was interpreted and translated in different ways by different authors into several languages. For instance, the case of Queneau whose textual manipulation smooths out odd language sentence constructions found in the book. In effect, his translation of the source text is appropriated to suit the target audience. His textual manipulation cuts through the translation of the title (*L'Ivrogne dans la brousse*) to his handling of Tutuola's unique diction. A lot has been said about Sévry's *La Voix* in preceding chapters and in Translation Studies, however there exists translations of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* in other languages, in this case, the Polish language.

To be discussed here as a parallel case study is Dorota Goluch's comparative analysis of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* in the Polish language. She writes about the translations done by two Polish translators, namely, Maria Cieślińska and E. Skurjat. Cieślińska translates a passage in a collection of African short stories but in this singular page, she uses standardized Polish language (Boase-Beier et al, 2014, p. 154). On the other hand, Skurjat narrates a more robust version of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* in the Polish language. She succeeds at capturing the presentation/form of the book and occasionally the language, as explained by Goluch. The extract below gives a broader commentary. "Moreover, Skurjat uses folk dialect or colloquial speech" She also "employs a domestic folk-tale convention but she does not fully appropriate Tutuola", however,

*“she recreates his eclecticism and anachronism, including the occurrence of modern devices and bureaucratic language” (Boase-Beier et al, 2014, p. 156).*

In the case of *La Flèche de Dieu*, coming from the perspective of African literary objectives, it is possible to state that d’Almeida uses her agency as a translator to establish the practice of literal translation for African fictional works. The freedom she enjoyed during the translation process was no doubt enhanced by her publishers. *Présence Africaine* has been known to promote Africa and the Black culture. There is a broader discussion on this subject below. Therefore, d’Almeida’s enthusiasm as an advocate of African culture and taste can be said to have played a major part in her translation approach.

#### **4.2 Éditions Gallimard as Agents in the translation field**

The publication house *Éditions Gallimard*, was already notable back in the 1950s, for it was founded in 1911. *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* was not published till 1952 during which France was enjoying far more freedom in literary expression than in the past. *L’Académie Française* was still present but was no longer as powerful in determining the acceptable standard of the French language in literary works.

The systematic changes that occurred in France in the 1900s and 2000s were gradual but consistent. They allowed for cultural diversity and less stringent literary standards. Gisèle Sapiro provides a summary of these changes in an article entitled “French Literature in the World System of Translation”:

*“The national canons were indeed constructed by those who held all the best assets for attaining literary success and consecration power, that is white men from families rooted for more than one generation in the national culture, established in the national cultural centers (or even just in the nation’s capital in a centralized country such as France), and with relatively abundant cultural capital at their disposal. The awarding to the black writer René Maran of the Prix Goncourt in 1920 provoked a general outcry in France... An outcome of decolonization, this change is undoubtedly also the result of the growing incorporation of literary exchanges into the global market of translation and of the shift from Paris to New York as the center of literary consecration, which led to a transformation in the modes of access to the “universal”. The new awareness that engendered affirmative action policies and theories of deconstruction brought about the relativization of the national canons. This was conceptualized through the notion of “diversity”. Writers and especially women writers, immigrants, those from the former colonies, or racial “minorities”, garnered increasing attention from publishers...”* (Sapiro, 2010, pp. 315-316).

In 1938, Raymond Queneau got a job at *Éditions Gallimard* where he worked as a translator, reader and a member of the reading committee (Bens, 1962, pp. 31-32). Hence, he was influential in the French literary circle. His translation approach to *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* could have probably been more alike to Skurjat, the Polish translator who was able to render a vivid translation in the Polish language. It can be said that translating African postcolonial literature does not necessarily need a perfect translation into a target language but an acknowledgement of cultural and traditional differences as in the case of Skurjat. Translating in this way, does not look to eliminate diverse dialects of a language but instead commend and compliment literary diversity. Before, during and after 1950, publication houses in France gradually started to include African books and translations into their catalogues. It has been noted that, but for a few exceptions,

*“writers from the former colonies had to wait until the 1980s to find consecration at the center of the francophone world, and it was often through a collective identity strategy [...], “negritude”, “francophonie” – that they managed to penetrate the literary and publishing fields, ...”.* (Sapiro, 2010, p. 315).

Given that several prizes were awarded to writers from minority groups such as Derek Walcott, Michael Ondaatje, Patrick Chamoiseau ..., “the French book policy was redefined in order to include all French language authors, regardless of nationality” (Sapiro, 2010, p.316). As a result of the sudden popularity of works by foreigners,

*Éditions Gallimard* published *Pour une littérature-monde* in 2007 as a strategy for adapting to the trends in the world market of translation...” (Ibid). This leads to the conclusion that the French population and her language which remained at the center of world literature for decades had stringent modes of operation until the advent of the American literary market.

#### **4.3 *Présence Africaine* as Agents in the translation field**

The place of *Présence Africaine* in the global literary community is well-established and solidified. Its main purpose has always been to represent and publicize that which concerns people of African descent. It has served and still serves as a voice in the literary circle that shouts for the acceptance and recognition of minority groups. A quote by Léon Gontran Damas in the article “The Political of “othering”: A discussion” enumerates the function of *Présence Africaine* and captures the role of the journal as both a collector and dispenser of information regarding Black history and culture.

*“Black voices spoke within us, we spoke within them, as if the “miraculous weaponry” extolled by the Black poets committed us to undreamt-of excesses. Via the journal Présence Africaine, the echoes of the Conferences of Rome (1956) and of Paris (1959) reached us belatedly. Conferences where the Poet, the Politician and the Man of Culture had expressed themselves on behalf of their race and their peoples, and had all*

*enjoyed the same status of legitimacy. There we, the children banished by Plato, finally found the sounds of our own liberation and of our legitimacy. With our sensitivity revitalized at the sources of negritude, and after the enchantment of the exotic and with our biographical peculiarities accounted for, we were able at last to be in harmony with works born from Black African cultural values, works that revealed themselves to be by writers (in the first and universal sense of the word) for whom every language is foreign and who are, essentially, devoted to creating and inventing forms of language derived from reality". (Rombaut et al, (Damas in "The Politics of "Othering") 1992, 411) (Emphasis is mine).*

Drawing from the above quotation, it can be seen that people of African descent who have in the past suffered under colonialism and had undergone a kind of brainwashing that lasted for quite a period of time, had lost the sense of their being, their identity, their history which was scarcely documented but orally passed down from generation to generation. Therefore, *Présence Africaine* and other such avenues were much more than publishing houses. They helped an otherwise unknown Africa and other Black populated countries and societies, to find a voice and an identity.

It has also been established that *Présence Africaine* was and is a force to reckon with and the power it has enjoyed for being an agent of minority groups and a literary agency for Black writers from all over the world continues to empower writers from minority cultures.

*“Its signs of representation have articulated themselves in the contradictory networks that signify the difficult dialogue of cultures in this century. That *Présence Africaine* has been able to maintain itself for forty years...” (More accurately sixty plus years now) “... **as a symbol of the right to alterity and subjectivity** witness to the intelligence of its founders and the dedication to its members. (Mudimbe, 1992, p. 445) (Emphasis is mine).*

From the above excerpt, *Présence Africaine* is seen as a “symbol of the right to alterity and subjectivity”. This simply means that the journal established their own policies, norms and standards, and it was far removed from what was considered conventional. D’Almeida, therefore in her translation of *La Flèche de Dieu* which was published by *Présence Africaine* worked under lenient rules. Still, Queneau, given his position as a literary authority, can also be said to have worked without much restriction.

In regard to the role played by the agency, *Présence Africaine*, it is safe to commend its leniency to writers and translators for the outcome of *La Flèche de Dieu* and the source-oriented translation approach used in the translation process.



## 5. Conclusion

Postcolonial literature is writing which has been influenced by both local and foreign societies. These influences sometimes become evident through the hybrid nature of such texts. Postcolonial writers are by definition, “translated men” (Rushdie, 1991, p. 17). An embodiment of a mixture of two cultures, two or more languages and two or more life experiences and perspectives.

This thesis discussed the different approaches applied by two translators, their treatment of the translation of two postcolonial African works: *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* and *Arrow of God*. Raymond Queneau’s strategy is explained first, so that Irène d’Almeida’s work can be seen clearly as being different in approach and consistency. Queneau's approach follows after the ethnocentric theory which emphasizes fluency and refinement thereby essentially smoothing out most of the uniqueness of the original text. D’Almeida on the other hand favours the ethnodeviant approach and as such is able to retain the unique flavour and distinctiveness of *Arrow of God*. Nevertheless, it can be said that no matter the background of the translator, a translation of *Arrow of God* will understandably be more source oriented than say *The Palm-Wine Drinkard's*. This is because the writers were from different educational backgrounds and had a different sense of social and cultural awareness. However, these books represent the trend in the translation of African postcolonial works. They are perfect opposites of

different translation strategies and reveal the importance of obtaining knowledge on the sociological backgrounds of all parties involved in a particular translation before a scientific analysis can be done on the translated text.

The books were neither written in the same year nor were they published by the same company, the only similarities they share are the authors themselves who are from the same geographical, if not the same educational background.

Finally, the analysis in the thesis shows that the extent to which a translator shares an affiliation or connection to a text is largely a function of the choices made in the translation process and the degree to which textual manipulation is applied.

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